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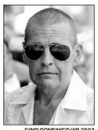
OBITUARIES

NICK TOSCHES 1949-2019

Swaggering music writer, biographer dies at 69

By Harrison Smith
The Washington Post



GINO DOMENICO/AP 2002

Author Nick Tosches died Oct. 20 at age 69.

Nick Tosches, a stylish, verbally unrestrained music writer, novelist, biographer and poet who wrote books on Jerry Lee Lewis, Dean Martin, American pop culture and the nature of celebrity, died Oct. 20 at his home in Manhattan. He was 69, and had previously expressed surprise to have lived past 50, having figured that he would die years earlier from "drugs and alcohol, if not being shot."

His friend and lawyer Gregory Cimino II, who confirmed the death, said Tosches had been ailing but did not cite a precise cause.

In "Dino," his best-selling 1992 biography of Martin, Tosches described the famed actor, singer and comedian as a menefreghista, Italian for someone with a couldn't-care-less attitude. The term just as easily applied to Tosches, a swaggering tavern-owner's son who donned silk homburgs, sprinkled his prose with profanity and Homeric metaphors, and espoused the earthy pleasures of French wine, fine opium and fried pork chops.

Tosches likened writing to prostitution; was banished from Rolling Stone magazine after he and colleague Richard Meltzer prankishly filed stories under each other's byline; railed against his publisher in a 2002 novel, "In the Hand of Dante"; and once fabricated the date of his own death in biographical materials, selecting 2021, the 700th anniversary of Dante's passing.

He often cited the Italian poet as an influence, alongside Hesiod, William Faulkner and Thomas Mann - even as he began his career in what was then considered a literary backwater, penning rock criticism in the late 1960s and '70s for Creem, Rolling Stone and Fusion magazines.

Tosches was credited with helping to elevate rock journalism and was dubbed one of the "Noise Boys," a group of bold and idiosyncratic writers that included Meltzer and Lester Bangs. "They were all partisans of rock at its noisiest — culture as ecstatic disruption," fellow critic Robert Christgau wrote in the Village Voice.

Tosches often seemed less interested in analytical criticism than in broader commentary. He said he sometimes reviewed records without tearing off the shrink wrap and fabricated the release of albums as a hook to riff off his latest idea.

"I never took the whole thing that seriously," he told The New York Times in 1992. "What I was doing, I don't know if it would be considered criticism or even journalism. I was just using it as a rubric to get away with things in print, things that probably would be impossible to get away with now."

Perhaps his most infamous early piece was a Rolling Stone review of Black Sabbath's 1970 album "Paranoid," which began with an imaginative description of satanic sex rituals involving "Shadaic numinae," "the mirrored sign of Ariael" and a hookah bowl filled "with black opium tars and a dash of Asthmador powders." The review concluded with Tosches seeming to confuse Black Sabbath with a rival band, Black Widow.

In addition to reviewing new releases and bluntly interviewing artists such as Patti Smith and Muddy Waters ("Do you like getting drunk?"), Tosches bestowed late recognition on forgotten and underappreciated performers. His first book, "Country" (1977), profiled musicians including yodeler Cliff Carlisle, and emerged out of Tosches's conviction that country music had been "damned, ignored and dismissed" by most critics.

He later wrote a companion volume, "Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll" (1984), spotlighting Big Joe Turner and Wynonie Harris, among many others. In Tosches's telling, the story of rock was "one of greed and innocence, tastelessness and brilliance, the ridiculous and the sublime," all coming together to create "a funhouse-mirror reflection of the American dream gone gaga."

His interest in questions of wealth, fame and desire went on to inform his work as a novelist and biographer, beginning with "Hellfire," his 1982 book on Lewis. The singer-songwriter and pianist was known as much for his hell-raising style as for tracks such as "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On"; Tosches opened his biography with a scene in which Lewis tried to ram his Lincoln Continental through the gates of Elvis Presley's Graceland mansion.

Police soon arrived to arrest Lewis, who "grinned and shook his head," Tosches wrote, "for he knew that the cold, brilliant handcuffs would not long contain him." In a later sequence, Tosches quoted Lewis as saying he was "glad" when Presley died: "Just another one out of the way. I mean, Elvis this, Elvis that. What . . . did Elvis do except take dope that I couldn't git a hold of?"

In 2006, Britain's Observer newspaper named "Hellfire" the greatest music book ever written. "Jerry Lee was, to me, like a figure out of the Old Testament, out of William Faulkner," Tosches told the newspaper. The book ended with Lee still alive and essentially contemplating eternity, he said, but "it's the way we all live. Shallow life, shallow ditch. Big life, big abyss."

Tosches was born in Newark on Oct. 23, 1949. A grandfather came to the United States from the Italian region of Abruzzo, where Tosches later traced Martin's ancestry, and his father worked as a bouncer at a burlesque house before running a bar.

He began writing what he described as "reams of garbage," publishing his first story when he was 19 and also crafting poetry, collecting many of his later pieces in the book "Chaldea and I Dig Girls." To support himself, he worked in the early 1970s as a snake hunter for the Miami Serpentarium, pouring gasoline down rattlesnake holes.

Tosches went on to combine investigative reporting with flamboyant, first-person writing for magazines including Esquire, Playboy, GQ and Vanity Fair, where he was a contributing editor and once chronicled his quest to visit an opium den.

Tosches' first novel, "Cut Numbers" (1988), was about crime, a recurring subject of his biographies. In addition to "Dino," which was slated for several years to become a film directed by Martin Scorsese, he wrote "Power on Earth" (1986), about Italian financier and felon Michele Sindona; "Where Dead Voices Gather" (2001), about minstrel singer Emmett Miller; and "King of the Jews" (2005), on New York mobster Arnold Rothstein.

He also wrote "The Devil and Sonny Liston" (2000), in which he suggested that the former heavyweight boxing champion had thrown his two title bouts against Muhammad Ali because he was controlled by the mob.

"Mr. Tosches is an exhaustive reporter," wrote New York Times reviewer Christopher Lehmann-Haupt. "He seems to have dug up everyone ever connected to Liston and got them to talk, particularly about the network of mob connections."

Chicago Daily Tribune

OCTOBER 29 ...

In 1929 Black Tuesday descended upon the New York Stock Exchange; prices collapsed amid panic selling and thousands of investors were wiped out as America's Great Depression began.

In 1979 nine blocks of Chicago's State Street were dedicated as a pedestrian mall. (That part of State Street, between Wacker Drive and Congress Parkway, was reopened to automotive traffic Nov. 15, 1996.)

In 1990 the U.N. Security Council voted to hold Saddam Hussein's regime liable for human-rights abuses and war damages during its occupation of Kuwait.

In 2000 the wounded destroyer USS Cole departed Aden, Yemen, towed by tugboats to a Norwegian heavy-lift ship to be taken home to repair the gaping hole in its side; 17 sailors were killed in a suicide bombing attack Oct. 12.

In 2004 Osama bin Laden, in a videotaped statement, directly admitted for the first time that he had ordered the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and told America "the best way to avoid another Manhattan" was to stop threatening Muslims' security.

In 2012 superstorm Sandy roared ashore and battered New Jersey, New York and other parts of the East Coast with high winds, floods and storm surge. At least 181 people died, 8 million customers lost power and 650,000 homes were damaged or destroyed.

In 2013 disgraced former U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. began serving a 30-month prison sentence at the Butner Federal Correctional Complex in North Carolina. (He was convicted in August of looting $750,000 from his campaign fund.)

WINNING LOTTERY NUMBERS

ILLINOIS
Oct. 28
Lotto .... 03 14 20 22 24 40 / 25
Lotto jackpot: $9.25M
Pick 3 midday .... 529 / 9
Pick 4 midday .... 1920 / 6
Lucky Day Lotto midday 21 22 27 39 41
Pick 3 evening .... 542 / 6
Pick 4 evening .... 4411 / 5
Lucky Day Lotto evening 05 12 18 26 42

Oct. 29 Mega Millions: $105M
Oct. 30 Powerball: $140M

WISCONSIN
Oct. 28
Pick 3 525
Pick 4 8276
Badger 5 .... 02 05 11 21 27
SuperCash 05 10 11 15 34 36

INDIANA
Oct. 28
Daily 3 midday .... 590 / 9
Daily 4 midday .... 4782 / 9
Daily 3 evening .... 723 / 7
Daily 4 evening .... 4400 / 7
Cash 5 .... 01 14 23 24 42

MICHIGAN
Oct. 28
Daily 3 midday 946
Daily 4 midday 0584
Daily 3 evening 033
Daily 4 evening 8986
Fantasy 5 .... 14 17 26 29 34
Keno 02 03 04 06 07 08 13 15 22 25 28 29 41 42 53 54 59 60 71 73 77 79

More winning numbers at **chicagotribune.com/lottery**

Chicago Tribune Death Notices

Chicago Tribune extends our condolences to the families and loved ones of those who have passed.

chicagotribune.com/deathnotice

Death Notices

Carli, Richard A.

Richard A. Carli 77, loving husband of Danniele nee Hansen, loving father of Carol Ann (James) Cummings, Richard (April), James, Tammy (Michael) Burdiak, William (Janine) Hahn, James (Mary) Henley Jr. grandfather of Ryan, Brianna, Drew, Catherine, Kelcie, Joseph, Olivia, Ashley, brother-in-law of Helen, father in law of the late Kristin, brother of the late Adolph, Norman. Visatition 10AM-1PM Friday **Kristan Funeral Home** 219 W. Maple (Rt 176 2 blocks West of Rt 45) Mundelein. Funeral 1 PM Friday at the funeral home. Interment Ascension Cemetery. For information visit www.kristanfuneralhome.com or 847-566-8020.

Sign Guestbook at chicagotribune.com/obituaries

Claus, Marilyn J.

Marilyn J. Claus, nee Kolzow, age 92, of Downers Grove. Beloved wife of the late Valentine Claus III; loving mother of Christopher (Kathy) Claus, the late Nicholas (Susan Riley) Claus, Martha (Chuck) Martin, Matthew (Jackie and the late Mary) Claus, Andrew (Karin) Claus, Anthony (Carol) Claus, Amy (Robert) Myers, Adam (Jeannie) Claus, and Adrian (Mike) Litwin; dear grandmother of Kendra (Patrick) Mitchell, Liam (Rachel) Claus, Conor Claus, Brennan (Allisha) Claus, Charlie (Sammi) Martin, Andrew (Caddie) Martin, Mackenzie (Matt) Bulis, Mason (Rachel) Martin, Perry Martin, Carolyn (Elliot) Burica, Christine Claus, Matt (Jen) Claus, Theresa (Brett) Felts, Adam Claus, Kevin (Cristina) Claus, Megan Claus, Natalie Claus, Sarah (Kurt) Dolson, Chelsea (Josh) Wright, Haley Myers, Amanda (Joel) Danowitz, Jessica Mateja, Peter (Emily) Claus, Nicki Claus, Laura (Brian) Shoener, and Michelle Litwin; dear great grandmother of Miriam, Sean, Bridget, Archie, Theo, Marilyn, Jackson, Jordan, Joey, Milo, Grace, Taylor, Benjamin, Ian, Clare, Fox, Archer, and Emmeline; loving sister of Rev. Andrew Kolzow, O.P., James Kolzow and the late Glenn Kolzow, the late Jeanne Jerousek-Cormack, and the late Patricia Russell; fond aunt of many nieces and nephews.
Visitation Tuesday, October 29, 3-8 PM at **Knollcrest Funeral Home**, 1500 S. Meyers Rd. (3 blks. So. of Roosevelt Rd) Lombard. Funeral Wednesday 9:15 AM at **Knollcrest Funeral Home** to St. Mary of Gostyn Catholic Church, 445 Prairie Avenue, Downers Grove, IL. Mass 10:00 AM. Interment Queen of Heaven Cemetery. Memorials to the St. Albert the Great Priory, Dominican Friars Province of St. Martin de Porres, 3150 Vince Hagan Drive, Irving, TX 75062 or Dupage County PADS, 705 W. Liberty, Wheaton, IL 60187 are appreciated. Funeral Info: www.knollcrest.net or 630-932-1500.

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Collin, Charlotte Anne

Charlotte Anne Collin, 92, of Jerome, Illinois, formally Centralia, Illinois, passed away on Saturday, Oct 26, 2019, at the VNA Hospice Center in Valparaiso, Indiana.
She was born in Chicago, Illinois on Wednesday, Sept. 7, 1927, daughter of John Andrew and Casimera (Rimkus) Gudauskas. Charlotte graduated from Lincbloom High School in Chicago, Illinois.
Charlotte was preceded in death by her loving husband Robert Collin, two sisters, and three brothers.
She is survived by her children Charlene Anne Collin of Jerome, Illinois, Phillip Andrew (Jean) Collin of Michigan City, IN, and Robert John Collin of Kokomo, IN. Also, surviving are her four grandchildren Kaya (Charles) Muller of Louisville, KY., Ryan Collin of FL., Stephanie (Nick) Fekete of Michigan City, IN., and Jesse Maxfield of Hoquiam, WA; sister-in-law: Pat Collin and several great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and cousins.
Visitation will be on Friday, November 1, 2019 at Geisen- Carlisle Funeral Home in Michigan City, Indiana from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. A Service will be held at 7:00 PM at Geisen-Carlisle with Father Kevin Huber of Queen of All Saints Catholic Church officiating.
A Prayer Service will take place on Saturday, November 2, 2019 at 10:30 AM at St. Casimir Cemetery in Chicago, Illinois with burial to follow.
Expressions of sympathy in Charlotte's name may be given to The American Diabetes Association.
To sign guestbook or leave condolences, please visit: www.Carlislefh.com. (219) 874-4214.

Sign Guestbook at chicagotribune.com/obituaries

D'Amore, F. Paul

F. Paul D'Amore age 84 of Glenview. Veteran, US Army. Beloved husband of Patricia D'Amore nee McGean; loving father of Thomas D'Amore, Mary Kate (Fred) Donnelly and Susan (Mark) Counselman; proud grandfather of Mary Clare, Danny and Hope Donnelly, Matthew, Connor and Patrick Counselman. Born in Milwaukee, Paul was a graduate of Marquette University High School and University of Notre Dame. Paul spent over 30 years as a successful executive as Vice President for Business Affairs at Marquette University and later as CFO and CAO at Kemper Reinsurance Company, Long Grove, IL. Visitation Wednesday October 30, 2019 9:30 a.m. until time of Funeral Mass 10:30 a.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help 1775 Grove Street Glenview, IL 60025. Interment All Saints Cemetery. In lieu of flowers memorials may be made to Our Lady of Perpetual Help (and note Sister Paulonne's Needy Family Fund in the memo line), 1775 Grove Street Glenview, Illinois 60025. Info www.donnellanfuneral.com or (847) 675-1990.

Donnellan Family Funeral Services

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Devlin, Joseph L.

Joseph L. Devlin, P.O.W. Beloved husband of the late Barbara nee: Stieglitz; Devoted father of Kathy (Jim) Long, Barbara Devlin, Dorothy (Dan) Glitto. Dear grandfather of Kristin, Jimmy, Jennifer, Joey, Michael, Danny and Anthony; Great grandfather of 11.
Funeral Thursday 8:45 a.m. from **Salerno's Rosedale Chapels**, 450 W. Lake Street, Roselle, 60172 (3/4 mile west of Bloomingdale/Roselle Rd., St. Walter Church, Mass 10:00 a.m. Interment Private (Assumption Cemetery). Visitation Wednesday 3:00 p.m. to7:00 p.m. In lieu of flowers, donations to American Legion Post, 1084 Roselle, Roselle, IL. For info 630-889-1700 or www.salernofuneralhomes.com

Salerno's Rosedale Chapels

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Doyle, Mary Julia

(nee McHugh), of Western Springs. Beloved wife and best friend of the late John C. (Jack); loving mother of Sean (Margie), Marty (Courtney), Kathy (Kevin) Cooney, Julie (Greg) Johnson, Neil (Joanie) and the late Mary Therese; loving grandmother of John (Madison), Packy (Daniella), Tara, Brian, Colin, Kevin, Jack, Danny, Maeve, Liam, Lally, Matt, Jacquelyn, Caroline, Brendan, Davoren, Hayden and Declan; Daughter of the late Julia (Lally) and Martin McHugh of County Galway, Ireland; Preceded by her brother, Patrick (Jean) Brendan McHugh. Sister-in-law of the late Robert and Alice Burke; Dear aunt of many nieces and nephews. Mom was a former grade school teacher and proud graduate of Mercy High School and St. Xavier University. She loved her family and friends, her White Sox and Fighting Irish, and her five decades on Little Twin Lake, MI. Visitation Wednesday 10-11 a.m. Lying in state at St. Barnabas Church 10134 S. Longwood Drive, Chicago Illinois. Mass at 11 am, Interment at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made in Mary's name to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation http://www.cff.org/chapters/grillinois/ 150 North Michigan Avenue, # 150, Chicago 60601 or the LuMind Foundation (http://lumindfoundation.org/) 225 Cedar Hill Street, 3200, Marlborough, MA 01752. Arrangements by **Cooney Funeral Home** 847-685-1002. www.cooneyfuneralhome.com

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